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Letter dated 24 June 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the statement dated 22 June 2003 issued by Igor S. Ivanov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, regarding the outcome of the Quartet meeting held recently in Jordan (see annex). I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex were distributed as document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Sergey **Lavrov**

* Reissued for technical reasons.

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Annex to the letter dated 24 June 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Igor S. Ivanov, on the results of the meeting of the Quartet of international mediators for a Middle East settlement

We conducted a thorough exchange of views with our partners in the Quartet on the situation in Middle Eastern affairs and also discussed in specific terms further steps to be taken in implementing the "road map", aimed at ending as soon as possible the protracted and bloody Palestinian-Israeli confrontation.

As of today, we can point out the main consideration: thanks to the active work of the participants in the Quartet, including the close personal involvement of the President of the United States of America, George Bush, we were able to keep the settlement platform "afloat" and achieve a principled agreement by the parties to the conflict on its implementation. In view of the existing circumstances and taking into account the acute nature of the confrontation between the Israelis and the Palestinians, this is already considerable.

The fact that there are favourable external conditions for achieving a breakthrough towards an improvement is also principally important. In the international community, including practically the entire Arab world, a broad consensus has in fact come about in favour of immediately taking practical steps for actually starting to advance towards a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Unfortunately, the situation remains tense. The latest outbreak of violence eloquently testifies to the fact that the forces opposed to a settlement have not abandoned their attempts to defeat the implementation of the "road map". Everything possible, therefore, must be done to prevent a new cycle of confrontation and preserve the opportunity that exists to resolve the crisis.

The Quartet participants support the policy of the Palestinian government headed by Mahmoud Abbas, aimed at halting the attacks by extremists, and call upon him to continue his energetic efforts to stabilize the situation. At the same time, we call upon Israel not to take any steps that may exacerbate the situation and to act consistently in favour of carrying out the provisions of the "road map". In this context, we welcome the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian contacts in the field of security as well as the work carried out by the Arab Republic of Egypt to achieve an agreement on halting the violence.

We are convinced that the Quartet's monitoring of the implementation of the provisions of the "road map" should play a major role in order to achieve steady progress on the path set forth in it. We support the efforts undertaken in this context by our United States partners and are, for our part, ready to participate actively in such work.

It is quite obvious that truly lasting peace in the Middle East is impossible without settling Israel's relations with the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon. Accordingly, we believe that the time has come to think out and develop a

programme of steps for resuming the negotiation process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. Carrying out such a programme would also ensure greater stability in moving the "road map" forward in the Palestinian-Israeli area.

The Russian Federation is prepared to continue to make active efforts to achieve in the Middle East a comprehensive and just settlement, in which framework two independent States — Israel and Palestine — will live side by side in peace and security, and all the countries and peoples of the region will have the possibility to develop in conditions of reliable stability and good-neighbourliness. In order to achieve this goal, we intend to act in close coordination with our Quartet partners and other parties concerned.

22 June 2003